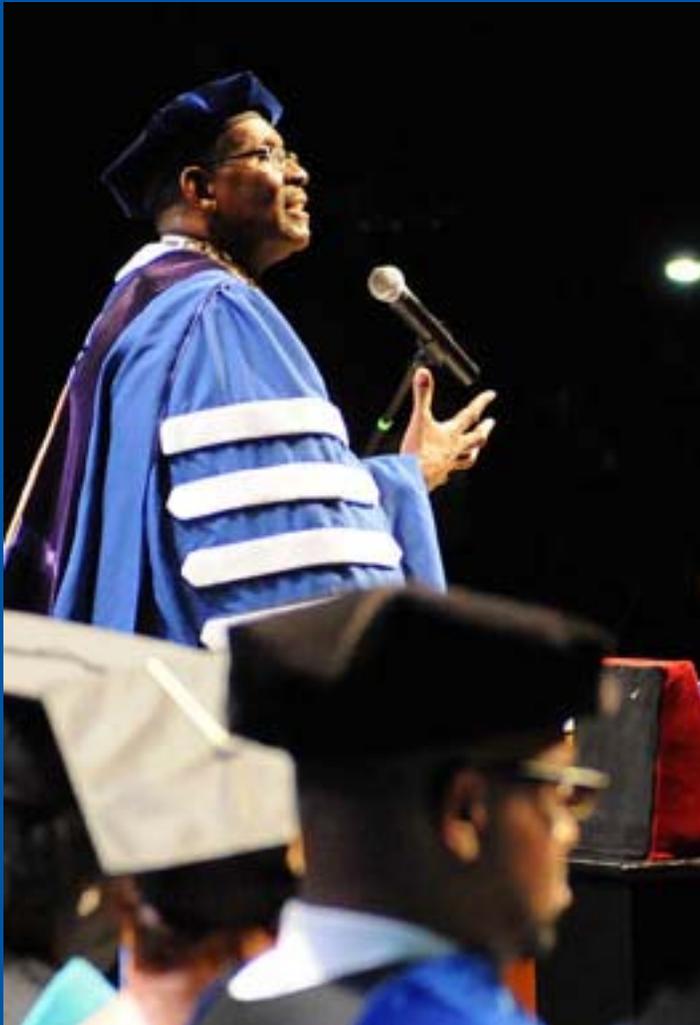


# Inauguration Address of President David Hall

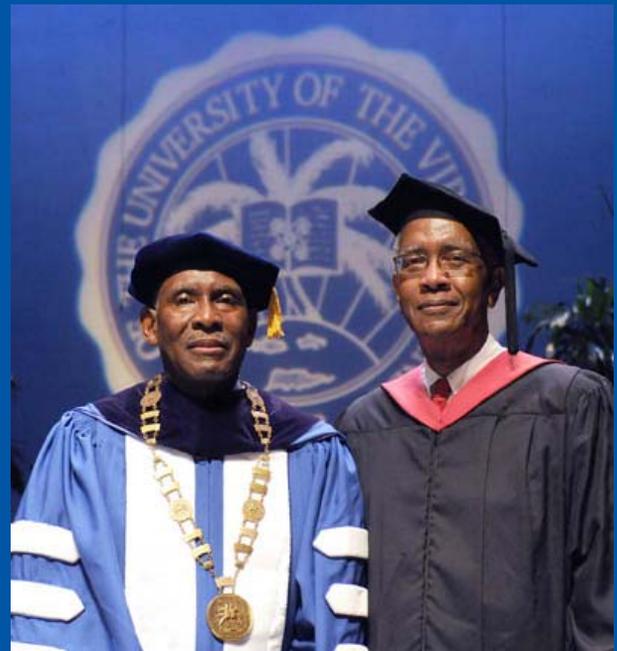
University of the Virgin Islands - March 6, 2010



UVI's fifth President Dr. David Hall

"I am here to declare that there is more to this University than the world might think, and our calling to greatness is within our reach."

- Dr. David Hall



President David Hall, left, and Chair of the UVI Board of Trustees Alexander A. Moorhead

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# **Inauguration Address of President David Hall**

## **University of the Virgin Islands**

**March 6, 2010**

### **“The Quest for Greatness”**

To the Governor in his absence, Lt. Governor Francis, members of the legislature, the judiciary, our Delegate to Congress, Trustees, alumni, students, faculty, staff, cabinet members, Dr. Ragster, President Franklin, our other distinguished platform guests and to all in attendance; it is with deep gratitude and humility that I accept the honor of being installed as the 5<sup>th</sup> President of the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI).

This is a very special moment in the life of this University and in my life. To have someone present at this installation from all the critical phases of my life makes it a magical moment. Present today is my sister, who was there when I was born, and other relatives who watched me grow. Present also is my best friend from high school, the wife of my junior varsity basketball coach who saw promise in me when there was very little talent evident. Also present are my college roommate and other teammates from Kansas State University; students I have taught at various law schools;

colleagues and friends from Northeastern and Boston; classmates from Harvard; neighbors; my pastor; numerous member of my former church home; members of the National Black Wholistic Society; and so many special people who have touched my life and helped me to become the person I am today. I am especially thankful that my wife, Marilyn, all three of my children and one of my grandchildren are present to embrace this moment with me. Words have not been created that capture the joy that the presence of all of these individuals creates within my heart. My only regret is that my mother and father, Levi and Ethel Hall, who sacrificed so much for me and provided so many of the values upon which I now stand, are not alive to witness this moment. But, I dedicate these words to them.

I am blessed to be the President of UVI and to build upon the wonderful foundation that my predecessors and so many others have constructed. Since the start of my presidency I have asked the University of the Virgin Islands to dream with me; to set our sights on something that transcends our present reality and limitations. Therefore, the theme we have embraced for this inauguration and for my presidency is "The Quest for Greatness."

There are those who do not expect the University of the Virgin Islands to be a leader in educational innovation and excellence. They are impressed with our beautiful location, our sandy beaches, our warm weather and turquoise waters. But I am here to declare that there is more to this University than the world might think, and our calling to greatness is within our reach.

Educational greatness is not measured by the number of students or buildings a university possesses, or the size of an institution's endowment. Educational greatness is measured by the depth of our compassion for our students, the creativity and rigor we demonstrate in our classrooms, the social relevance of our research to this region and the world, and the openness and inclusiveness with which we operate this University. Greatness for us will also be measured by the amount of love in our hearts, the "regalness" of our character, and the depth of our commitment to serve others.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once stated, "Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. ... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love." Our greatness, then, will be measured by how UVI

serves the people of the Virgin Islands by helping to address one of the most challenging issues we face – the education of our children. I am honored to have the Commissioner of Education present today. She is deeply committed to working with the University as we strive collectively to improve the quality of K-12 education. I am also thrilled that the principal of the Charlotte Amalie High School gave greetings today. Her presence symbolizes that our recognition that we must open our doors widely to schools throughout this territory if we are to become a university that helps all students reach their full educational potential.

Our quest for greatness demands that we build on our existing areas of excellence, and add new academic programs that this economy and marketplace desperately need. With support from the hospitality industry, we could build here a world class program in resort and hotel management. Our nationally known work in Aquaponics at our Agricultural Experiment Station, with the right strategic investment, could transform food production within the Territory. The prominence we already have in undergraduate research must be expanded so that every student who comes to this University will be engaged in a demanding

research project that expands their knowledge, nurtures their creativity and enhances their academic success.

Greatness allows us to see the potential in every student that enters this University, and it equips us to extract from them the genius that lies buried within them. Greatness is a mandate and not a slogan. And the mandate charges us to do all we can to ensure that all of our students succeed and graduate. Every time a student leaves us and chooses not to obtain a higher education degree, then this choice distracts from our quest for greatness.

Yet greatness also contains high expectations for us and for others. We do not inspire our students by accepting mediocrity. We inspire them by creating high standards and assisting them in their quest to meet those standards. A great professor is not one who creates obstacles so others will stumble. The great professor creates challenges and also lights the pathway for conquering them. Greatness is a metaphor for the transformation process. As educators we are in the business of inspiring ordinary people to become extraordinary human beings.

Our quest for greatness must compel us to work tirelessly to reverse a destructive trend that is occurring relative to male students in this Territory. Young boys in this community, who may not see college as within their reach or their dreams, must be inspired by the bright and conscientious male students at UVI who are on a mission to redefine what it means to be a man. We must stand with them every step of the way. “Brothers with a Cause” as they are called, must become a cause for everyone in this community.

Our quest for greatness also demands that we build new facilities so that our students can live and learn in an environment that is worthy of their presence, and our faculty and staff can work in an environment that contains the most sophisticated equipment and instruments they need to conduct cutting edge, scientific research. We must be bold enough to claim that this University will become the destination of choice for students throughout this region and nation. We will no longer be the best kept secret; the world will know that we are here because of the quality of our work and facilities, and the quality of our people.

There are those who would argue that now is not the time to dream big. The economy is still struggling, the political terrain is challenging, and resources are limited. But the culture from whence we come suggests that it is in the midst of uncertainty that we most yearn for freedom. The spiritual tradition that many of us embrace teaches that we have the power to see the sunlight in the midst of our darkest hours. This is not the time for UVI to withdraw into our educational caves and wait for the storm to pass. Now is the time for us to use our creativity and help turn the winds of the storm into energy that will fuel our future. That statement has metaphorical and practical significance. This University must become a catalyst and resource for this Territory's quest to explore and embrace renewable energy.

To become a great university we must understand that greatness is not a place; it is a value and a way of life. We cannot achieve this greatness if we become selfish with our time or resources. This is one of the many areas in which this University already excels. I have been so moved by the countless hours that our faculty, staff and administrators devote to this institution. Many of them do not confine their work to pre-determined

hours. They pour their hearts and souls into this educational enterprise and for that, I am so grateful to each one of them. One clear example of this is the enormous work that has been done in preparing for these inauguration activities. So as they stand, I ask that you join me in applauding all of those on the Inauguration Committee who have worked so hard and tirelessly to make these events such a success. I want to especially thank Michelle Smitherman from Institutional Advancement who has been a magnificent co-leader of this process.

Greatness is a spirit that emanates from an institution and its people. You feel it when you are in their presence. So the task that lies boldly before us is to always ensure that when people come to this place that they will know it is special. They must feel our values in the atmosphere we create through our collaborative work and our genuine respect for each other.

In conclusion, I'm sure by now you have identified a spiritual cord that runs through this song I'm singing. I deeply believe that my presence and presidency at this University are not a mere coincidence.

When I was a young boy growing up in Savannah, Georgia, I had many dreams. I would spend many waking hours imagining my future and yearning for something greater than I was experiencing. Because of the love of parents and family, the guidance and inspiration of teachers and coaches, and the spiritual nurturing of church and family, I felt that there was something special that I was called to do.

I want to share with you two of those many dreams I had as a young boy. One of those dreams had to do with girls. I dreamed that there was this special woman that I would one day fall deeply in love with and that she would love me with an authentic passion that was indescribable, but real. This was more than a dream but became a yearning in many of my quiet moments. I believe that God heard that yearning and on March 12, 1962 a girl was born by the name of Marilyn Braithwaite who would eventually become my wife, soul mate, and the fulfillment of that dream.

I had another dream that I would lead a special institution or group that would make a tremendous difference in the lives of people and the world. I didn't know exactly what type of organization but I remember that it was one that spoke to the world and was not limited to the physical

boundaries of the United States. I believe God heard that yearning as well, and on March 16, 1962 the University of the Virgin Islands was founded. There was something spiritually profound occurring and being readied for me in March of 1962.

Though I had many other dreams, some fulfilled, and others unfulfilled, I am thankful that those two dreams manifested themselves in my life. So I love Marilyn Braithwaite-Hall with a deep passion and I love the University of the Virgin Islands with a deep passion.

As with Marilyn, I believe we were fashioned by God for each others. We will not always agree. We will not always get it right, but I deeply believe that this covenant between a President and this University will bring forth great things in the future.

So I thank the Board of Trustees for granting me this honor and opportunity to become the 5<sup>th</sup> President of the University of the Virgin Islands. And I say this day to the world: if in the future you see this University soaring through the skies of educational greatness; if you see us transforming lives that others have rejected; if you see us extracting mountains of hope from the valleys of despair; know that we are not

standing solely on my work and vision. We will be standing on the work and sacrifice of outstanding faculty, staff, administrators and students. We will be empowered by the generous support of our Trustees, alumni and friends. We will be resting on the wings of generations of Virgin Islanders who called this University into existence; and we will be propelled by the Caribbean winds of God. The only question for the world, is “Do you want to come along for the ride?” For the University of the Virgin Islands is on a journey and a quest for greatness.